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NEW DIVISION IMPROVES DIVERSITY, CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINORITY BUSINESSES

Joel Hunt, Central Office

In an effort to promote diversity and provide equal opportunities both internally and externally, ODOT has created a new Division of Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion. The division will work on behalf of all stakeholders to open up more business and employment opportunities with the department.

The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise, the Office of Equal Opportunity and the Office of Outreach have all been combined under the new division. Equal Employment Opportunity Contract Compliance and Prevailing Wage employees from all 12 districts will now report to the division while remaining at their current locations.

Acting Deputy Director Kimberly Watson said after the division comes online in July, the first order of business will be to begin changing the culture of how we do business at ODOT.

“We need to increase meaningful participation with DBEs and MBEs,” said Watson. “We need to take a more active role in connecting businesses with contractors and opportunities. And all of our programs need to consider diversity and inclusion before making decisions.”

Deborah Green, administrator of the division’s new Office of Outreach, said change is already happening, thanks to a series of town hall meetings around the state.

“Our town halls bring together prime and small minority-owned subconsultants to discuss barriers to doing business with ODOT, and ideas on how to remove those barriers to increase the participation of small businesses on our projects,” Green said. “We facilitate break-out sessions that allow people to voice their concerns, brainstorm solutions and network together.”

More than 50 people attended each of the Cleveland and Columbus town halls. A total of five town hall meetings have taken place, with two more scheduled in June for Cambridge and Dayton.

The division was born from a process mapping exercise that took place over a number of months last year.

The division will continue to support the department’s efforts to provide services to its internal stakeholders and other partners. Future issues of Transcript will report on these efforts to increase workplace diversity.

“In order for this division to be successful, we need the support of everyone at ODOT,” Watson said.
SK THE DIRECTOR

Q “I would like someone to explain how the bonding against the Turnpike will affect us in 30 years. I would like more of an explanation of ODOT’s budget. Management acts like we don’t have money, but then comes to us with nearly $5 million dollars for new strobe lights on trucks. Doesn’t that send mixed message about us as an organization?”

A “In the Transportation and Jobs Act signed into law by Governor John Kasich in 2013, the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission was given the authority to sell bonds, backed by future turnpike toll revenues. That money is being used for both turnpike improvements and ODOT construction projects in Northern Ohio that have a “nexus” with the turnpike. The Turnpike Commission has already sold $1 billion in bonds and may at a future date sell more.

Thanks to this innovative financing program, ODOT is able to keep expanding and improving Ohio’s highways.

Transportation users and industries strongly depend on a quality transportation system to support jobs and commerce which strengthens the economy. While this is an excellent boost to our program and the many, much needed projects, it is not repeatable in the future. The benefits are significant and since the bonds will be paid off with future toll revenue, there is no long term negative to ODOT, the turnpike or Ohio.

ODOT is a large operation that includes expenditures on facilities, equipment, materials, people and contracts. We are easily criticized for every purchase or decision we make. Our operating currency is not simply money. Equally important are safety, time and public opinion. Our challenge is to balance our needs with our revenue and make sure we’re providing the people of Ohio with value. Establishing an optimum level of operation balanced with our revenue will allow us to achieve maximum performance.

As for the strobe lights: the evidence is clear that they improve safety, and in turn protects our number one asset—your fellow team members.

In a near future issue of Transcript, we will devote most of the space to background and information about our revenue, budget and expenditures.”

— Director Jerry Wray

The ODOT News Fast Five

1. WORKERS ARE EDUCATED ON HT SERIES CHANGES
   An update on the Highway Technician (HT) series was communicated to all affected employees by labor and management. Changes include faster training, separate maintenance and construction career paths, and less construction experience.

2. ODOT EMAIL MIGRATES
   The recent upgrade to Microsoft Office 365 brings changes to the email system. Users will now need to sign in to email using their State of Ohio User IDs (SOUIDs) and SOUID passwords. SOUIDs are also used when accessing pay checks via myOhio.gov.

3. PUBLICATION FEATURES ODOT, PRISON PARTNERSHIP
   The Construction Equipment Guide highlighted the partnership between ODOT and the Chillicothe Correctional Institute, which involves inmates building customized dump trucks for the department.

4. NEW FACILITY WELCOMES COUNTY CREW
   Columbiana County employees moved into a brand new full service maintenance facility. The $10 million facility took just over a year to build and includes more salt storage, equipment and truck storage buildings, and a main building with offices.

5. DISTRICT 3 CREW RECYCLES EQUIPMENT
   Crawford County employees repurposed two seldom-used trailers by converting them into incident management trailers. Crews can now hook up the road-ready trailers and quickly arrive to the scene of an incident.
ODOT’s Budget: Where Does It Go?

ODOT’s two-year biennial budget is just under $6 billion, funded primarily by the state gasoline tax and the federal highway trust fund. Any realized operational savings are directed to the capital program. Where is the money spent? In 2016, our $2.95-billion budget is planned to be spent on:

**ODOT System Preservation: $1.236 Billion**
Maintains the transportation infrastructure ODOT already owns. It is used to repair the 43,308 lane miles of roads and bridges in Ohio by keeping them up to date.

**Safety: $102 Million**
Spent on projects that help make the transportation system safer. The most unsafe areas of the transportation system are identified, then projects are developed to make them safer.

**Local System Preservation: $312 Million**
Funds that ODOT gives to cities and counties to help them maintain their transportation systems that link to ODOT’s state system.

**Major New: $128 Million**
Adds additional capacity to the transportation system with new roads or bridges.

**Modal: $68 Million**
Spent on non-highway modes of transportation like aviation, rail, and public transit.

**Debt Service: $305 Million**
Pays back the revenue bonds that ODOT sells to help finance transportation projects.

**Operating: $807 Million**
Funds the district and Central Office operations including payroll, utilities, salt, fuel, and building maintenance.

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**Casting a Wide Safety Net**

Ericka Pfeifer, District 5

District 5 recently held their annual safety fair, and for the first time, speakers at the event were chosen by the employees. Each presenter reflected safety issues directly requested by members of the District 5 team. Traffic HT Andy Fish attended the safety fair and found the instructors to be extremely helpful.

“They all made you think,” said Fish. “It’s easy to fall into bad habits.”

District 9 safety inspector Ed Cox talked to the employees about what to do in the critical time between when an injury occurs and emergency services arrive. An emergency medical technician as well as ODOT employee, Cox discussed topics such as CPR, AED and first aid. Proper training for these accidents could save lives.

One speaker, Muskingum County HT Stephen Folden, was involved in an accident when a semi crossed over cones while on site. As a crew leader, he talked about the importance of following guidelines for setting up zones. Also, Joe Philips and Doug McLaughlin set up a track hoe to remind employees where to stand while near an operating piece of equipment.
A DAY IN THE LIFE
No such thing as a typical day
Pieter Wykoff, Central Office

For the five ODOT pilots who fly the department’s four planes and a helicopter, the concept of a “daily routine” simply does not exist.

“There is no typical day at the ODOT Office of Aviation. You have to be very flexible,” says Aviation Manager and Chief Pilot Mark Groves.

Most people assume that the pilot’s main job is to transport state officials to different parts of the state. Those people are wrong.

“Passenger transport is a minor part of the job,” says Andrew Doll, an ODOT pilot who has flown for the department for over 20 years. “We do a lot more than that.”

Groves says their office is in charge of the safety of the state’s 168 general aviation airports, 97 of which are publicly owned. The pilots perform airport inspections, including the pavement conditions of all of these airports every three years. They conduct mapping surveys for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, including forest health surveys that look for tree damage. They use the helicopter to assist the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigations in marijuana eradication. Anytime someone wants to build a tower near an airport, they evaluate the proposal to see if it is an aviation hazard. Annually, they register all of the 6,000 private planes in Ohio.

They assist ODOT’s capital construction program by mapping major new capacity projects from the air for the Office of CADD and Mapping, formerly known as Aerial Engineering.

“It’s very accurate,” Groves says. “We do surveys from the air instead of the ground with a digital camera and special LIDAR equipment.”

Excellence is never an accident; it is the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, skillful execution and the vision to see obstacles as opportunities.

— Anonymous
National bicycle route taking shape with Ohio project

Becky Giauque, District 11

With numerous states creating new bike routes and/or designating established paths, the United States Bicycle Route System (USBRS) is starting to take shape. Designated by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, the USBR is poised to become the largest bicycle route network in the world. ODOT’s District 11 has contributed to this great national effort by planning and building a part of USBR 50, a path that will eventually run for over 300 miles through Ohio.

Members of Planning & Engineering met with highway management employees to discuss the possibility of building a shared-use path on ODOT’s right of way parallel to U.S. Route 22 for about half a mile. Consulting further with Real Estate and Environmental Services, the district’s roadway crews were given the go-ahead to do the work through this last winter and spring. Completed just this Memorial Day, the official route now runs on County Road 5 (Main Street) all the way through the village of Hopedale to its new half-mile path to the Jefferson County line and U.S. 22.

Julie Walcoff, ODOT bicycle, pedestrian and Safe Routes to School program manager, said, “The Department of Transportation, planning organizations, advocacy organizations, and volunteers all worked together to ensure our new route would provide scenery, amenities, and comfort as riders take the opportunity to tour our beautiful state.”

When fully completed, USBR 50 will eventually link urban, suburban, and rural areas from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco, California.

For more information about Ohio’s bikeways and trails, visit: www.bike.ohio.gov.

Giving a dam

Erin Patton-Graziani, District 12

In 1938, a culvert under Morley Road in Lake County’s Concord Township was modified with a spillway to create the L’Alouette Plumee Lake. In 1960, ODOT constructed the State Route 44/State Route 84 interchange, resulting in a raised profile of Morley Road. The result was the creation of an embankment along Morley Road measuring more than 30 feet high that today qualifies as a dam. But there would be another result more than 50 years later: the creation of an active sinkhole.

Lake County Engineers discovered the sinkhole and a collapse in the original culvert earlier this year and contacted the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Soil and Water Resources to investigate. ODNR determined action was needed to either build up the exiting dam or remove it. ODOT District 12 worked together with the Lake County Engineer and the Cleveland Metroparks to undertake this quite unusual project.

It was decided to remove the Morley Road dam using a three-step process: remove the spillway to drain L’Alouette Plumee Lake; construct a new culvert adjacent to the old one; and restore natural stream function to the drained lake. So far, the lake has been drained and teams have performed two fishing events that retrieved close to 1,500 live fish, which Cleveland Metroparks relocated to other regional lakes.

Lake County developed the design plans, and will construct and administer the work as a local-let project. ODOT will provide the required matching funds for the grant to aid with the dam removal and culvert replacement. In addition, ODOT has lent pumping equipment for the siphoning of the lake.
Is ODOT ready? Yes!
Ericka Pfeifer, District 5

In March, the Army Corps of Natural Resources declared the four-mile-long, 180-year-old Buckeye Lake dam had become severely weakened. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has since committed to keeping the lake level low until the dam is fixed or replaced.

Meanwhile, ODOT is re-examining its own emergency response readiness, with a careful eye on Interstate 70. If the dam fails, many predict portions of the highway would flood. So Tom Bradford and Mitch Blackford—highway maintenance administrators of districts 5 and 6, respectively—mapped out a plan. With help from their transportation managers, they identified alternate routes, signage and ramp closure locations, and the roles of county and district teams.

“We know that we would be doing much more than putting up signs and maintaining traffic,” said Licking County Manager Jeff Hill. “Our interstates and local roads will be a mess, and heavy equipment will have to be hauled in along with our operators to make sure the roads get cleared as quickly as possible.”

ODOT has also contributed to a full-scale evacuation drill conducted by the Fairfield County Emergency Management Agency. Participating agencies reviewed their policies and procedures to ensure that the thousands of potentially impacted citizens would be taken care of. All agreed that success relied on one thing: transportation. While ODOT efforts may go unnoticed for now, the department’s services will be essential, and potentially lifesaving, if they are called into action.

Col. Todd Audet, P.E. (center), the Ohio Air National Guard chief of staff, received a promotion to the rank of brigadier general on Saturday, April 25, 2015. Audet is ODOT’s District 2 deputy director, where he oversees the transportation needs of northwest Ohio.
Highway Tech ‘nostalgic’ for drag racing
Brent Kovacs, District 4

For Rich Miller in Stark County, the weekends must move pretty fast. That’s because he spends them flying down a quarter-mile strip of pavement at incredible speeds.

Miller has been drag racing cars for over 25 years. These days he races in the “nostalgia” class, with vintage drag cars which first appeared during the 1950s and 60s. His own car is a 1948 Ford Anglia. So far, his best quarter-mile time is 9.7 seconds at 140 mph. Miller says seeing these cars on the strip is a real crowd-pleaser.

“Nostalgia drag racing is all about going back to the roots of the sport like it used to be when drag racing first became popular,” Miller said.

Miller, who got his start in the sport from his dad, is a member of the racing car group Nostalgia Nation. They travel for eight races every summer to tracks between Salem, Ohio and New York City. He spends every other summer weekend in his RV, traveling to racing events. But drag racing is not just a summer hobby; the other three seasons are spent working on his car, either fixing something that is broken or making it faster.

Miller and his Ford Angila have been published in two magazines: “Cruising Times” and “Gasser,” which went on sale this past spring. He and his wife Wanda have three children and one grandchild, all of whom are involved in his hobby.

“The aspect of racing that I enjoy the most is the family part,” Miller said. “My wife, mom, dad, kids and grandkid all get involved and enjoy the races.”

Miller’s best memory drag racing was early last June, when he competed at Thompson Raceway Park in Ohio. It was the first time his grandson attended a race. Miller won, out of a field of more than 450 other cars!